

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 OPR-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 A-01 SY-05

MCT-01 /080 W

-----086732 271311Z /44

P R 271130Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3452

INRO RUESUA/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 8373

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT BR

SUBJECT: STUDENTS STAGE NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE DEMONSTRATIONS IN
SEVERAL CITIES

REF: (A) BRASILIA 6358 (B) RIO DE JANEIRO 3544

(C) RIO DE JANEIRO 3447

1. SUMMARY. AFTER TWO WEEKS OF INACTIVITY, STUDENT PROTESTERS
TOOK TO THE STREETS AUGUST 23 IN SEVERAL MAJOR BRAZILIAN CITIES.
THE DEMONSTRATIONS, MARKING A "NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE" IN
PROTEST OF THE ARREST OF STUDENTS DURING THE PAST SIX WEEKS IN
RIO AND BRASILIA, INVOLVED IN MOST CASES RELATIVELY SMALL
NUMBERS OF PARTICIPANTS. IN SAO PAULO, 20,000 POLICE ARMED WITH
NIGHTSTICKS, TEAR GAS, AND SOGS ATTEMPTED TO REPRESS A SERIES
OF LIGHTNING MARCHES IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA. ARRESTING ALMOST
200 DEMONSTRATORS AND BYSTANDERS AND CREATING GENERAL CONFUSION
IN THE CITY'S CENTER. IN BRASILIA, THE STRIKE AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRASILIA APPEARS ALMOST OVER, AS INCREASING NUMBER OF STUDENTS
ARE RETURNING TO CLASSES; A MASS COMMEMORATING THE AUGUST 23
ACTIVITIES WAS ATTENDED BY ONLY 200 OR 300 PERSONS. END SUMMARY.

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2. STUDENTS COMMEMORATING THEIR AUGUST 23 "NATIONAL DAY
OF STRUGGLE" STAGED PROTEST MARCHES THROUGH CITY STREETS
THAT DAY IN SAO PAULO, PORTO ALEGRE, SALVADOR, AND CAMPINAS;
DEMONSTRATIONS WERE ALSO HELD ON CAMPUS IN RIO DE JANEIRO,
BELO HORIZONTE, AND RECIFE. THE MANIFESTATIONS, PROTESTING
THAT ARREST AND IMPENDING TRIALS OF COLLEAGUES IN BRASILIA

AND RIO (REFTELS), WERE THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT STUDENT PROTEST ACTIVITIES SINCE AN AUGUST 4 PROTEST MARCH BY SOME 2,000 UNIVERSITY OF SAO PAULO (USP) STUDENTS, WHICH THE POLICE ALLOWED TO PROCEED UNIMPEDED. THE AUGUST 23 DEMONSTRATIONS, HOWEVER, WERE FORCIBLY REPPRESSED IN SAO PAULO, CAMPINAS AND PORTO ALEGRE BY POLICE ARMED WITH NIGHTSTICKS, WATER CANNONS, TEAR GAS, AND DOGS. POLICE DID NOT INTERFERE WITH A PROTEST MARCH BY 2,000 STUDENTS IN SALVADOR, NOR WAS THERE ANY REPRESSION OF THE ON-CAMPUS DEMONSTRATIONS IN OTHER CITIES.

3. THE SAO PAULO DEMONSTRATORS, REALIZING THAT ANY SINGLE MAJOR DEMONSTRATION WOULD BE QUICKLY BROKEN UP BY POLICE, HIT UPON THE TACTIC OF STAGING A SUCCESSION OF RAPID, SMALL PROTEST MARCHES THROUGHOUT THE CITY'S DOWNTOWN AREA. THE POLICE, EXPECTING A LARGE CONCENTRATION IN THE LARGO SAO FRANCISCO, SITE OF THE USP LAW SCHOOL, WERE CLEARLY TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND CONFUSED BY THE STUDENTS' NEW TACTIC. ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER OF PROTESTORS INVOLVED WAS SMALL--NO MORE THAN 1,000 IN THE LARGEST "LIGHTNING MARCH", ACCORDING TO O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO--THE TUMULT CREATED IN DOWNTOWN SAO PAULO WAS CONSIDERABLE. LOOKING AT PICTURES IN THE PAPER THE NEXT DAY, CHAMBER MINORITY LEADER FREITAS NOBRE STATED THAT THEY GAVE "THE IMPRESSION OF A CIVIL WAR" BECAUSE OF THE VIOLENCE USED BY POLICE IN REPRESSING THE DEMONSTRATIONS. ACCORDING TO THE POLICE, A TOTAL OF 197 PERSONS--INCLUDING HALF A DOZEN JOURNALIST--WERE ARRESTED; ALL BUT TWO WERE RELEASED AFTER BEING IDENTIFIED AND BRIEFLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUESTIONED.

4. SIMILAR TACTICS WERE USED BY PROTESTORS IN PORTO ALEGRE, WHERE THE DEMONSTRATIONS RESULTED IN AT LEAST 90 ARRESTS AND CAUSED A COMPLETE TRAFFIC TIE UP IN THE CITY'S DOWNTOWN AREA. ALTHOUGH ONLY SOME 1,000 STUDENTS WERE INVOLVED IN THE PROTEST O ESTADO SAID THAT IT WAS THE LARGEST MANIFESTATION IN PORTO ALEGRE SINCE 1968. THE MANIFESTATIONS IN SALVADOR AND RECIFE, ATTENDED BY 2,000 AND 1,500 PERSONS, RESPECTIVELY, WERE ALSO THE FIRST DEMONSTRATIONS OF THIS TYPE SINCE 1968. THE ON CAMPUS ACTIVITIES AND POORLY ATTENDED, DRAWING BETWEEN 500 AND 1,000 PEOPLE.

5. THE STRIKE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRASILIA, MEANWHILE, AFTER DRAGGING ON FOR 80 DAYS, APPEARS TO BE AT AN END. ALTHOUGH THE UNB CAMPUS REMAINS OCCUPIED BY POLICE, STUDENTS HAVE BEEN RETURNING TO CLASS IN INCREASING NUMBERS AND AN AUGUST 23 SOLIDARITY MASS ATTRACTED NO MORE THAN 200 OR 300 PERSONS. AS A RESULT OF THE STRIKE AT LEAST 35 STUDENTS HAVE BEEN CHARGED UNDER THE NATIONAL SECURITY LAW AND 27 OF THESE ARE STILL IN CUSTODY. AND WHILE THE ARRESTS ON CAMPUS HAVE FOR THE PRESENT STOPPED, THE

POLICE ARE STILL IMPEDING ANY ATTEMPTS TO HOLD DEMONSTRATIONS. DOZENS OF PLAINCLOTHES AND UNIFORMED POLICE WERE STATIONED IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH WHERE THE AUGUST 23 MASS WAS HELD, AND AN ATTEMPT TO HOLD A MASS WEEK EARLIER WAS THWARTED WHEN THE POLICE PRESSURED CHURCH OFFICIALS INTO REFUSING TO ALLOW THE STUDENTS ACCESS TO THE CHURCH IN QUESTION.

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H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 A-01 SY-05
MCT-01 /080 W
-----086902 271311Z /40

P R 271130Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3453
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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6. COMMENT. JUSTICE MINISTER ARMANDO FACAO'S OMINOUS COMMENT OF SEVERAL WEEKS AGO THAT THE STUDENT PROTESTOR'S "TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES" WERE BECOMING ALARMINGLY SIMILAR TO THOSE USED DURING THE MAJOR DISTURBANCES OF 1968 IS SUPPORTED BY THE AUGUST 23 DEMONSTRATIONS. CONFRONTED WITH A LARGELY INDIFFERENT OR FEARFUL MAJORITY (WHICH, FOR EXAMPLE, REJECTED RECENT EFFORTS TO STAGE A STRIKE AT USP IN SYMPATHY WITH THE UNB STRIKE), A SMALL GROUP OF STUDENTS HAS CLEARLY EXPRESSED ITS WILLINGNESS TO TAKE TO THE STREETS IN DEFIANCE OF THE POLICE AND REGIME. THEIR SLOGANS, CALLING FOR RESTORATION OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES AND AN END TO REPRESSION DICTATORSHIP AND THE MILITARY REGIME ARE OPENLY CONFRONTATIONAL AND CALL TO MIND THE THEMES OF THE 1968 DEMONSTRATIONS. THE STUDENTS SEE THE AUGUST 23 DEMONSTRATIONS AS A VICTORY FOR THEMSELVES; THEY ARE UNDOUBTEDLY BUOYED, MOREOVER, BY WHAT NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS DESCRIBE AS SIGNIFICANT, SPONTANEOUS, POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THAT DAY'S MANIFESTATIONS. THE PROTESTORS ARE HOWEVER, AT THIS TIME LARGELY WITHOUT AN ISSUE, WITHOUT ANY RALLYING CRY OTHER THAN OPPOSITION TO THE CURRENT REGIME. THE TEMPTATION, THEREFORE, WILL BE TO QUICKLY HOLD MORE DEMONSTRATIONS, KNOWING

THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE AUGUST 23 MARCHES WILL ENSURE A LARGER
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TURNOUT NEXT TIME AND GENERATE ADDITIONAL MOMENTUM.

7. THE GOVERNMENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, MUST FEEL SOME SATISFACTION THAT ITS TACTICS AND PATIENCE HAVE FINALLY BROUGHT THE STRIKE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRASILIA ALMOST TO AN END. GIVEN THE CONFUSION PRODUCED BY THE AUGUST 23 DEMONSTRATIONS IN SAO PAULO, HOWEVER, THERE IS BOUND TO BE CONCERN ABOUT A REPEAT PERFORMANCE, AS WELL AS CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE NATIONAL COORDINATION BY THE STUDENT PROTESTORS. AMONG HARD-LINERS, THE BELIEF EXISTS THAT THE ENTIRE STUDENT PROTEST MOVEMENT IS BEING MANIPULATED BY OUTSIDE SOURCES. RECTOR AZEVEDO OF THE UNB, IN APPARENT SERIOUSNESS, RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFF THAT ENTIRE SERIES OF STUDENT PROTEST HAD BEEN PLANNED 18 MONTHS AGO A A MEETING IN ROME OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE BRAZILIAN COMMUNIST PARTY. HE WENT ON TO NOTE (CORRECTLY) THAT A MOVIE ABOUT STUDENT STRIKE ACTIVITIES IN SAO PAULO WAS BEING SHOWN AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES, ALLEGING THAT THE FILM IS NOT DOCUMENTARY BUT A TRAINING FILM CONSTITUTES FURTHER PROOF OF OUTSIDE MANIPULATION OF STUDENT PROTESTORS.

8. A CUROUS SIDELIGHT TO THE WHOLE STUDENT PROTEST MOVEMENT HAS BEEN THE INACTIVITY OF EDUCATION MINISTER NEY BRAGA, TROUTED BY THE PRESS AS A (VERY)DARK HORSE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. BRAGA HAS MAINTAINED

WHAT HE REPORTEDLY BELIEVES TO BA A BALANCED ATTITUDE, SAYING AND DAOING NOTHING IN PUBLIC, IF AT ALL. HE HAS AGREED TO MEET WITH STUDENTS OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES BUT ONLY IF THEY ARE NOT STRIKING. BRAGA HAS, MOREOVER, REFUSED TO INTERVENE IN ANY INTERNAL UNIVERSITY DISPUTES, SAYING THAT RESOLUTION OF SUCH DISPUTES FALLS ENTIELY WITHIN THE SPHERE OF INDIVIDUAL RECTOS TO ACT AS THEY SEE FIT. THIS HAS BEEN WIDELY INTERPRETED AS A TACIT ADMISSION THAT SOMEONE OTHER THAN HIMSELF IS INSTRUCTING RECTOR AZEVEDO; IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED, IN FACT, THAT BRAGA HAS NOT EVEN BEEN CONSULTED ON MOST ISSUES

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REGARDING STUDENTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS. THIS IMPRESSION WAS FURTHERED BY AJORNAL DO BRASIL STORY WHICH STATED THAT BRAGA WAS NOT EVEN INFORMED IN ADVANCE ONE DAY THAT 10 TRUCKLOADS OF POLICE WERE BEING SENT TO THE EDUCATION MINISTRY TO PREVENT A SCHEDULED DEMONSTRATION (THE DEMONSTRATION NEVER MATERIALIZED AND BRAGA EVENTUALLY ORDERED THE POLICE TO LEAVE). BRAGA'S INACTION WOULD SEEM IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRATIONS, DESIGNED TO ANTAGONIZE AS FEW PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH

HIS LACK OF LEADERSHIP CANNOT BE VERY REASSURING TO POTENTIAL
SUPPORTERS. END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BRASIL07095
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770310-1057
Format: TEL
From: BRASILIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770816/aaaaamtz.tel
Line Count: 227
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 93e1df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BRASILIA 6358, 77 RIO DE JANEIRO 3544, 77 RIO DE JANEIRO 3447
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1460564
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUDENTS STAGE NATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE DEMONSTRATIONS IN SEVERAL CITIES
TAGS: PINT, PINS, BR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/93e1df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009